

Chapter 1

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR A GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN



Photos by: David Libman, Dr. Chuck Summers and Dr. Steven Bach

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park
Draft General Management Plan/
Environmental Impact Statement

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CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR A GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This *General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* presents and analyzes three alternative future directions for the management and use of Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. The plan also presents a discussion of potential commercial services and concessions with respect to providing visitors access to various resources and programs within the park, especially the campground, the Hensley settlement and the Fern Lake lands. It therefore serves as the park's commercial services plan as well as the General Management Plan. The potential environmental impacts of all alternatives (including impacts related to commercial services) are also identified and assessed.

General management plans are intended to be long-term documents that establish and articulate a management philosophy and framework for decision making and problem solving in the parks. General management plans usually provide guidance for a 15-20 year period. Actions directed by general management plans or in subsequent implementation plans are accomplished over time. Budget restrictions, requirements for additional data or regulatory compliance, and competing national park system priorities prevent immediate implementation of many actions. As a result, implementation of major or especially costly actions could be delayed into the future.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park is located on the tri-state boundaries of Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee and encompasses 24,531 acres (Figure 1). A map of the park is depicted in Figure 2, with detailed features of the Cumberland Gap Area shown in Figure 3. The term *park* is used to refer to all units of the national park system and will be used throughout this document to refer to Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. The park lies in four counties in the three states, ranges from one to four miles in width, and stretches for 20 miles astride the forested Cumberland and Brush Mountains. Over 14,000 acres in the park are managed as wilderness.

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park was authorized by Congress on June 11, 1940 to commemorate the story of the first doorway to the west (Appendix A includes the park legislation). Carved by wind and water, Cumberland Gap forms a major break in the formidable Appalachian Mountain chain. First used by large game animals in their migratory journeys and then followed by American Indians, the Cumberland Gap was the first and foremost avenue for the settlement of the interior of this nation. In the late 17th century, this route into the rich hunting lands of "Kaintucke" was known to several American Indian tribes, but only a few handfuls of Europeans. In 1750, Dr. Thomas Walker, surveyor of the Loyal Land Company, became the first to document the route to the Gap. Dr. Walker named the route in honor of William, Duke of Cumberland, brother of King George II. In 1775, a little known long-rifle hunter named Daniel Boone was commissioned to blaze a road through the Gap. Boone's Trace evolved into Wilderness Road, establishing his place in history as a frontiersman and pathfinder (Figure 4). Cumberland Gap was the primary route to the west until 1810.

During the Civil War, the Gap was thought to be strategically important to both the Confederate and Union armies. There was no military railroad near the Gap, so portions of Wilderness Road were used to transport supplies, troops, and ordnance.

In 1908, the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads constructed the "Object Lesson Road" through Cumberland Gap, opening the area to increased traffic. In the 1920s, major segments of the old Wilderness Road became U.S. Highway 25E and U.S. Highway 58.

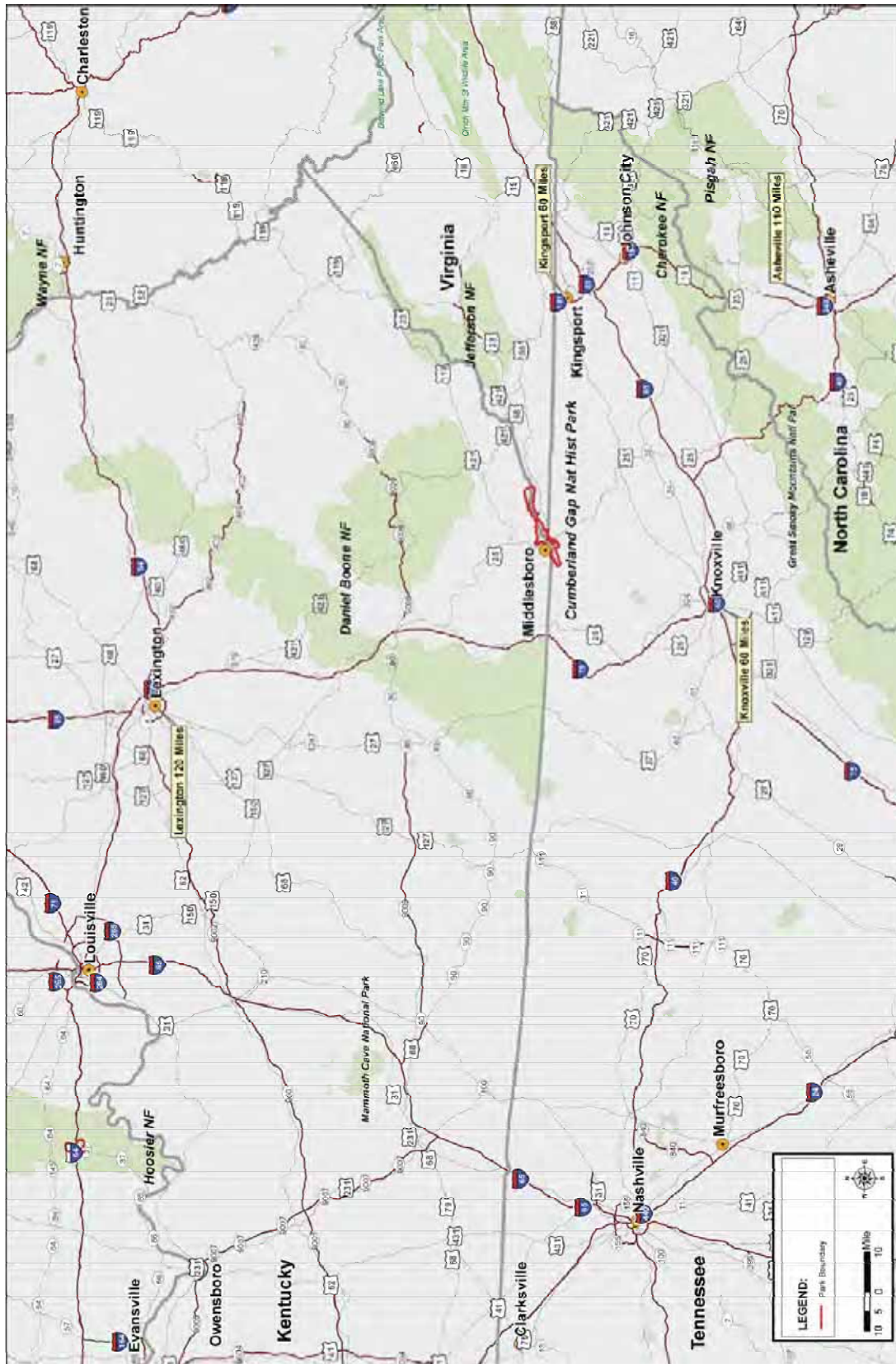
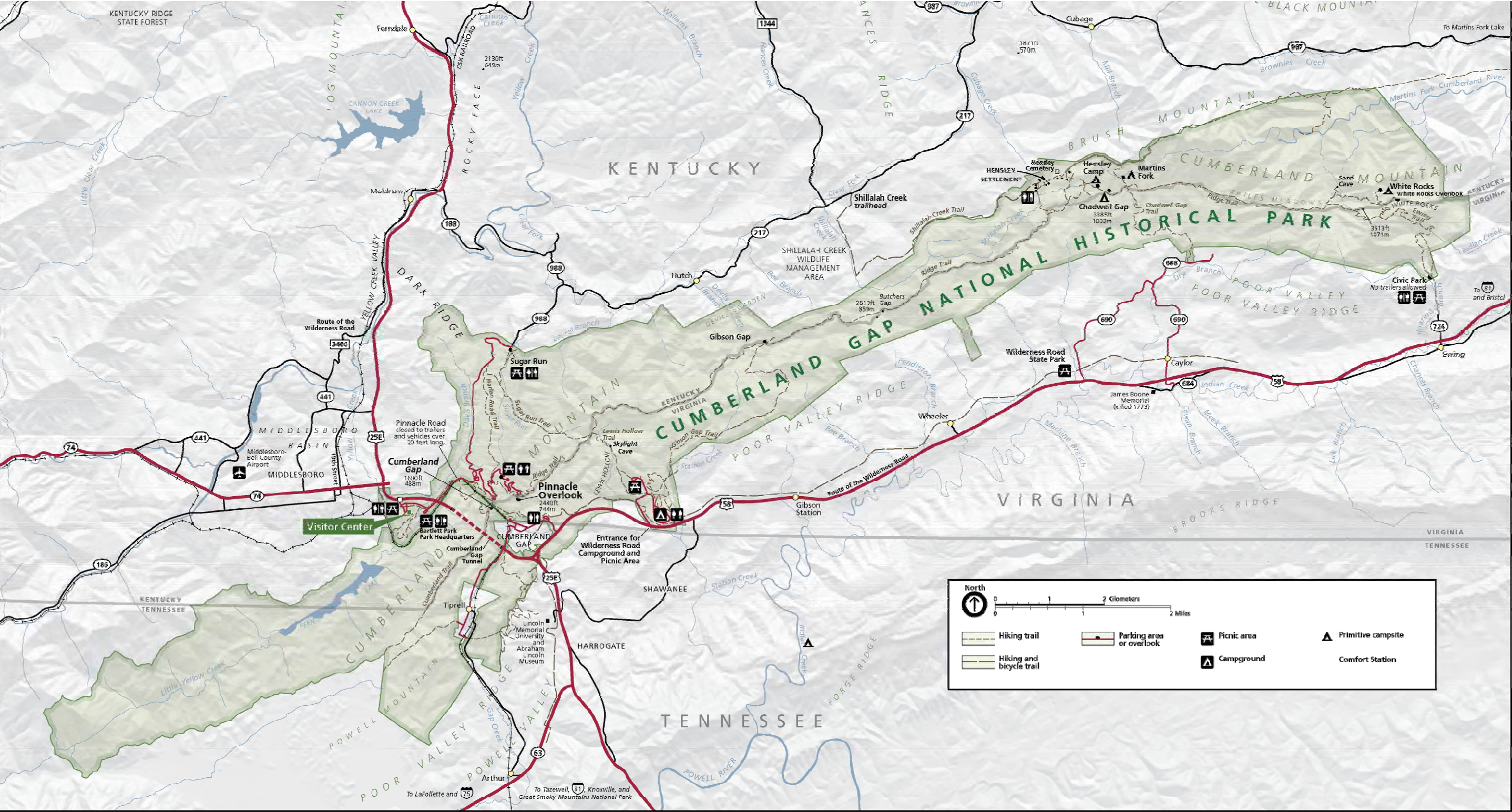


Figure 1

Location Map

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

U.S. Department of the Interior - National Park Service



Park Map

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park
U.S. Department of the Interior - National Park Service

Figure 2



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